

THE CORRESPONDENT.

MAGNA EST VERITAS ET PREVALEBIT.

BY GEORGE HOUSTON, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

Mr. Editor—It is very desirable that this question should be brought before the public in all possible ways, and repeatedly. Nothing is wanting to set truth on a firm basis, but public attention to public discussion. I wish, therefore, to urge for the consideration of your readers, what I consider the present state of the argument, and the solid, unrefuted objections to Christianity, which strike at its very foundation. I know the gross ignorance of the clergy generally. I know the incompetence of ninety-nine out of every hundred of them to such a discussion. But there are some among them who know the common defences; and none among them can be ignorant of the extravagancies, the falsehoods, and the obscenities of the books they pretend to believe as the inspired word of God. If, when they see the objections of Christianity staring them in the face—exposed to the gaze of the public—calling on them to defend the system they preach—if, when they see and know the difficulties attending their doctrine, they pass them by as unworthy of their notice, they are either impudent and unprincipled swindlers, taking money under false pretences, and neglecting their most imperious duty, or they profess themselves unblushingly, the careless, hired, prostituted advocates of an indefensible imposture; and they get their living by the public profession of known falsehood, defended on their part, because it conforms to the prejudices which, from a misconducted education, their hearers have imbibed. It is a base and dishonest vocation thus to obtain ease and luxury; and a great majority of them know it. Is it not high time that the people who pay them, should know it too? This may be harsh language, but I do not acknowledge the claims set up by fraud and falsehood to be treated with respect.

I propose in a series of short essays—

1. To investigate the obvious, and common-sense rules for judging of human testimony; particularly the plain canons of criticism relating to the evidence of history.
2. To investigate the evidence on which Christianity exists, as founded on the passages in Pliny, Tacitus, and Suetonius: the forgeries in Josephus and Longinus have had their day.
3. To investigate whether there be any and what evidence for the authenticity of our present gospels over cotemporary and acknowledged forgeries.

4. To show the general character of the ancient fathers of the Christian church, on whose evidence, the authenticity of the four gospels now adopted, mainly rests.

5. To inquire how far that evidence is binding on the men of the present day.

6. To compare in a general way, the value of religion, with the evils that arise from the abuse of it: and to enquire whether religion be of any use whatever in a social community: and whether prayer, praise, and thanksgiving be not mere folly and absurdity, when addressed to what is called God, or the supreme being.

This may take me at least half a dozen papers. I shall not pretend to novelty, for what new can be urged on such a subject at this day? But the clergy bring their cause, and their abuse of infidelity forward every Sunday, in every place of worship throughout the whole land: it behoves their opponents, therefore, to be equally on the alert, and urgent with facts and arguments which the clergy are bound to reply to; and which they cunningly treat with apparent contempt, not because these facts and arguments are easily answered, but because these hired advocates of imposture know them to be unanswerable.

I shall not, however, begin this series of essays in the present communication, because I want to transmit to you some passages that struck me with much force, and which I think I noted down from some one or other of the numbers of the "Republican." I believe no. 26 of vol. 13, page 820.

I have been meditating on the general practice professed, adopted, and defended by the most learned among the Christian fathers, the practice known by the name of *Economia*—the practice of forging and lying for the purpose of promoting the common cause. We can fix this by direct evidence, on Origen, Jerom, Eusebius, Chrysostom: and so far as the citation of books as genuine, now known and acknowledged by all the orthodox to be forgeries, extends, we can fix it on almost every one of the drivellers of the second century—men whom Evanson very appropriately speaks of, as the ancient mothers, the old women of the church. Even Priestley, devoted as he was to his own scheme of unitarian Christianity, could not help after Mosheim, lamenting this roguish propensity which is so manifest a blemish in the main props and pillars of the Christian edifice. See *Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit*, vol. 1, page 393, note: Mosheim's *Dissertation*, p. 247, 248. What credit is that man entitled to, who justifies and practices falsehood and forgery whenever it is likely to serve his purpose? This practice, however, is not without defence from scriptural example; as the following texts will shew. To be sure the children of Israel were forbidden to bear false witness against their neighbor, that is against each other; examples of lying, justifying the practice from high authority, abound in the Christian bible.

Thus, 14 Numbers 30, 34. Doubtless ye shall not come into the land concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb, the son of Jephthah; and Joshua, the son of Nun. *** After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year,

shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years; and ye shall know my breach of promise.

1 Kings, ch. 22, v. 23. Now, therefore, behold the lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets, and the lord hath spoken evil concerning thee.

20. Jerem. 7. O lord, thou hast deceived me, and I am greatly deceived.

15. Jerem. 8. Wilt thou be altogether to me as a liar, as waters that fail?

4. Jerem. 10. O lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem.

14. Ezek. 9. If a prophet is deceived, I the lord deceived that prophet; and I will stretch out my hand, and destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. Might not one well ask here, why, what evil hath he done? If he is deceived did not you deceive him? Have you any right to punish him for your fault?

2. Thes. ch. 2, v. 11. For this cause God shall send them strong delusions that they might believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth. This is something like God hardening Pharaoh's heart, and then punishing not only Pharaoh but the Egyptians.

That we should find the time serving prevaricator, Paul, guilty of lying, is no great wonder: he gave contradictory accounts of the circumstances of his conversion: he lied when he said he was called in question for the resurrection of the dead: he professed to become all things to all men, to serve his own purposes: but in the following passage, he defends lying on system: no wonder the ancient fathers were led away by his example.

3. Rom. 70. For if the truth of God, hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

Jesus himself appears to have used a prevarication so nearly approaching to a falsehood, that I beg of the reader to distinguish it if he can. In 7 John, 8, he says to his brethren who put no faith in him while he lived, but who took care to live upon his reputation after he was dead, "Go ye up unto this feast; I go not up yet unto this feast, for my time is not yet fully come. When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee. But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret!" Aware of the direct falsehood that would otherwise be manifest, the clergy have taken care to foist in the word *oupo* instead of *ouk*. The true reading is, I shall not go up unto this feast. The latest, the most learned, the most approved of the editors of the new testament, *Griesbach*, has settled this question not to be stirred again. He has ascertained the authenticity of *ouk*, and adopted it; and rejected *oupo*; instead of *oupo anabaino*, it is *ouk anabesomai*, I shall not go.

If the devil be the father of lies, must we impute all these lies to that much abused personage? But contradictory precepts and examples abound in the bible. Thus, "honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long in the land which the lord thy God giveth thee." Very good. Now pray reconcile it with the behavior of Jesus Christ to his mother Mary in repeated instances of harsh language and reproof. Com-

pare it with the following text, 14 Luke, 26. "If any man come to me, and *hate* not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

Then again: "thou shalt not kill." Very good. Why then is the old testament filled with cruel, revengeful, murderous commands? Why were all the women and children, and all the animals on the face of the earth put to death at the deluge, because some of the men did not live as God wished them? Thou shalt kill—thou shalt put to death—thou shalt smite with the edge of the sword—thine eye shall not spare—thou shalt surely put to death men, women, and children, oxen, sheep, and asses! Yet do the clergy, without blushing, and without any scruple of conscience, being hired and paid by their ignorant hearers, declare these abominable commands to have been given by God almighty; inspired by him, the God of mercy and of peace! Can the human imagination imagine any falsehood too gross and abominable for these men to utter, when they utter such detestable commands as the commands of God! No wonder the Christian religion is a cruel and intolerant religion, and its priesthood a cruel and intolerant priesthood! No wonder, when their religion engages them to defend these horrid precepts and practices!

"Thou shalt not commit adultery." Very good. This is all right. Let us look at the conduct of the holy men of old, in reference to this precept.

Abraham, the friend of God, lends his wife to Abimelech, and commits adultery with Hagar.

Lot, in a tipsy frolic, commits incest with his two daughters.

Jacob commits adultery with his two servant maids; whence many of the Patriarchs were bastards, according to modern notions.

David, the man after God's own heart, was the legitimate king of murder and adultery,

Solomon had 300 wives, and 700 concubines.

Who committed adultery with the young wife of Joseph? Was not Jesus Christ, according to gospel account, born of a woman who concealed what had passed, and whose husband was first made privy to his wife's conduct not by her but by a dream? Is this a proper story to be told to females, old or young? Is not this something like the apology in Terence's *Eunuch*, "*Fertur venisse clanculum per impluvium fucum factum mulieri: at quem Deum.*"

"Thou shalt not steal." Very well. Such is the precept, what is the practice? The *Israelites* stole jewels and other things from the Egyptians. *Rebecca* stole her father's household gods. *Micah* stole some metal and made it into gods. *Sampson* killed thirty Philistines for the purpose of stealing their shirts. *David* killed two hundred Philistines and stole their foreskins. *Jesus Christ* and his disciples went into a corn field and made free with the corn. They went into a village and brought away an ass or asses.

Enough of these scriptural contradictions. I will endeavor, in the proposed series of essays, to strike honestly and fairly, by argument such as I believe in point, and by facts such as I believe uncontrovertible, at the root of this long prevailing imposture. If the priests can defend their doctrines by open and fair discussion, let them. These are not days and

times when men will willingly pay their money, for unproveable assertions, and sectarian squabbles. The stronghold of the priesthood at this day, consists of the females, whose weak and uninstructed intellects the clergy contrive, through fear and through fraud, to mislead and to govern. Among sensible *men*, there is now only one opinion, that priests and the priesthood subsist upon imposture, and are the greatest nuisances that society has now to complain of.

I ask of any honest and well meaning parent, how he can justify to himself bringing up his children in reverential belief of such a book as the bible? Is there a book in existence that contains more filth and more falsehood? So much, that I dare not copy the proofs of my assertion on paper, lest the public should cry out against exposing these abominations! To take such an advantage as parents usually do take, of the infant understandings of their offspring, is a gross imposition; which, when the child becomes a man, he will not thank his parent for, if he have common sense. It is a sacrifice for the most part to mere pusillanimity; the parents are afraid of the priests, and therefore they sacrifice to the priesthood the intellect of their children.

If the Christian religion be well founded in its historical evidence, a well-read person can easily shew it. If it be not, is it not a base countenance afforded to imposture, to countenance this religion! The clergy have been challenged often enough to defend themselves; why do they not do it? The press is open to them, public encouragement supports them, public prejudice favors them, they are sure of a fair and patient hearing. Why do they not come out and defend their Sabbath-day money making? They are accused of Sabbath breaking of the worst kind: of receiving money for declaring from the pulpit every Sunday, what they do not know to be true, and what they ought to know to be false. Yet they will not let a farmer even make hay when the sun shines on a Sabbath day: this is a privilege they exclusively reserve to themselves.

PHILO VERITAS.

DEATH-BED REPENTANCE OF LIBERALS.

Concluded from page 197.

Triumphant as are the refutations of the calumnies heaped on the memoirs of Voltaire and of Hume, particularly as they relate to the unaltered state of their minds when about to close their eyes in death, they are not more so than what has been clearly established respecting the steady adherence to principle of Thomas Paine, during the whole of his eventual life, and to the last moment of his existence. Were it not that it would crowd your pages to the exclusion of other interesting matter, numerous testimonies could be brought forward to show, that every thing which has been said as to this great man's death-bed recantation, is *utterly false*, and originated in a spirit of malignity, peculiar to minds imbued with bigotry and fanaticism. I cannot, however, forbear inserting here a document, which, although published about two years ago, has, I believe, not been circulated so extensively as its merits and importance require; but which, were there no other evidence in existence, would of itself be sufficient to confound the vilifiers of Mr. Paine's memory. It is as follows:—

"A short narrative of the later period of the life of THOMAS PAINE, written by Walter Morton, Esq. of New-York; one of his executors.

"On Mr. Paine's return to New-York, in 1802, a public dinner was given him at the City Hotel. I being one of the committee of arrangements, who prepared toasts for the occasion, it led me to an acquaintance with that justly celebrated man, which continued without intermission to the day of his death. I visited Mr. Paine several times at his farm at New Rochelle, twenty one miles from New-York, where he resided in part of 1804 and 1805; after he returned to reside in the city, I was in the constant habit of spending two or three evenings with him every week; these visits were generally from seven to eight o'clock in the evening, and I usually remained with him till about ten, at which hour he went to bed. We generally drank two small tumblers of rum and water, each containing less than half a gill of rum, reduced to what is commonly called glass proof. We rarely exceeded this, and sometimes for weeks, and even months, almost in succession, I saw him in bed before my departure, and put out his candle: while in health he generally rose about seven o'clock in the morning. He always took a nap for about two hours after dinner; and while at the farm I ascertained from those who lived in the house, as well as the store keeper who supplied the liquor, that the weekly allowance was limited to a quart, whatever visitors might be called to partake.

"In the 73d year of his age, and but a few months before his death, his mental faculties continued strong, firm and vigorous, and his memory so retentive as to repeat verbatim whole sentences either in prose or verse, of any thing which had previously struck his mind: this he always did with great ease and grace. About six months before his death, his limbs became so feeble that he could scarcely move through the room: he told me when alone, that he felt the decay of nature fast increasing, that he might possibly live six or even twelve months, but it could not exceed much beyond that time; and feared nothing but being reduced to a bed ridden state, so as to lie incapable of helping himself.

"In his religious opinions he continued to the last as steadfast and tenacious as any sectarian to the definition of his own creed. He never indeed broached the subject first; but to intrusive and inquisitive visitors who came to try him on that point, his general answer was to this effect: "My opinions are before the world, and all have had an opportunity to refute them if they can; I believe them unanswerable truths, and that I have done great service to mankind by boldly putting them forth; I do not wish to argue upon the subject; I have labored disinterestedly in the cause of truth." I shook his hand after the use of speech was gone, but while the other organs told me sufficiently that he knew me and appreciated my affection, his eyes glistened with genius under the pangs of death."

As to the character of Mr. Paine, those who were long and intimately acquainted with him have assured me, that he was a man not only strictly just and honorable in all his transactions, but of a most benevolent and humane disposition. Besides the magnanimity which he displayed in voting for saving the life of the king of France, and which nearly cost him his own life, he was the means of rescuing an Englishman from the

hands of the executioner, under circumstances which confer immortal honor on his name. When Mr. Paine was a member of the French National Convention, this hot headed Englishman struck him a violent blow at a public meeting; which was considered an insult on the whole assembly, and punishable with *death*. But, instead of resenting the injury, Mr. Paine got the aggressor liberated—supplied him with money—and procured a passage for him to England.

Supposing, however, for the sake of argument, that Voltaire, Hume, and Paine—nay thousands of others who thought as they did—had died recanting their religious opinions, would it seriously be pretended that this was a proof of their being previously in error? Would it not rather show, that the change of mind had been occasioned by the infirmities of age and sickness?

The arguments advanced in the “Philosophical Dictionary,” in the “Dissertations on Miracles,” or in the “Age of Reason,” would have been equally as strong, and the reasoning as accurate if the opinions of the writers had changed, as if they had continued the same to the close of their lives. Every system of religion ought to stand on its own merit alone, and bear the closest examination in bodily health and sound reason. The system is rotten that trusts for support to *sickly* opinions, and stories of death-bed recantation. If Sir Isaac Newton’s opinions had changed on his death-bed—if he had then (in a state of nervous alarm, excited by the superstitious fears of his surrounding friends) declared that his former philosophical reasonings concerning the rotundity of the earth—the motions of the heavenly bodies, and the laws of gravitation, were false; that agreeable to the bible he now believed the earth was an outstretched plain; that there was no planetary system—nor regular motion of these bodies; and that the laws of gravitation were visionary and absurd—that, in accordance with divine revelation, he believed there was a concave arch over our heads, called, in scripture, a firmament—that the stars were fixed to it—and that the sun moved round the earth. Such a change of opinions would not have made his former reasonings false; nor proved that such sickly opinions were true. It would only have shown that his faculties were impaired, and his mind agitated—and that, in such a state, he was incapable of reasoning accurately on the subject.

In like manner, if Voltaire, Hume, or Paine, or any others entertaining and avowing similar sentiments, had changed their opinions on their death-bed, the case would have been precisely the same with their reasonings as I have now supposed would have been those of Sir Isaac Newton. That men, who live their days without any fixed principle—men who never trouble themselves about the truth or falsehood of any opinion, are generally troubled with qualms of conscience on their death-bed, I readily believe. But that men, who form their opinions and principles after a complete investigation of the subject;—who, after having been daily strengthened in these principles for years, should give them up in, what is called, the *trying* hour, requires something more than bare assertion to make it credible.

ARISTIDES.

TEMPERANCE SOCIETIES.

Mr. Editor—A late number of the Middlesex (Conn.) Gazette falling into my hands, I have observed in it several articles on the subject of intemperance, duly colored with a legitimate portion of religious cant. The following is an extract :

"On Monday, March 30, Mr. Benjamin H. Coe, one of our most excellent inhabitants, (who a few month since discontinued, from principle, the retailing of distilled spirits) had the honor of moving the first large building without *poisonous drink*, which has been moved in town since our recollection. Some little opposition was excited when it was known that he was determined not to offer spirits. A few who were invited, refused to come, or send their teams. But no sooner was this known than those who had formed no strong league with the *Emmissary of Hell* turned out, and ninety or a hundred pair of cattle were upon the ground:—thirty or forty more than were necessary. When told beforehand that they were to have nothing to drink but water and beer and cider, replied, 'that is all we need, and it is good enough.' And they showed an ambitious and laudable desire to draw the building *without rum*."

It is not my intention to support the abuse, nor even the use of ardent spirits; but merely to point out the mistake these men have fallen into, by expecting to overcome the evil by the means which they employ—an evil which has proved so injurious and detrimental to the welfare and happiness of man.

Mr. B. H. Coe, who is said to have discontinued the retailing of distilled spirits from *principle*, has, I presume, found that moving buildings is a much more profitable occupation than retailing liquors at three cents a glass. Be this as it may; will the depriving men of the use of distilled liquors at one particular time or occasion, make them sober citizens? The persons who were engaged in the above-mentioned moving, had "beer and cider," which, to use their own expression, "is all we need, and is good enough." This is very much like the old story of curing the avaricious appetite of a man for roast beef, by substituting *plenty of beef steaks*! It is well known that beer and cider, if given to any extent, will not be slow in intoxicating the head of a stout heart; who, while he flatters himself that he has thrown aside his greater enemy, is substituting one equally pernicious and injurious to himself. Besides, if Mr. Coe had considered, he would have found some as habitual topers of beer and cider as of rum or brandy; and that the drink he offered was as great an inducement to some as distilled liquors would have been to others.

In another column of the same paper I find the following paragraph :

"Messrs. Joseph P. Camp and George W. Jewett, merchants in Durham, who a short time since discontinued retailing, from a conviction that the use of distilled spirits was not only unnecessary but injurious, have transported to Middletown their whole stock of brandy, (fourteen barrels) and sold it at several dollars less than cost, besides trouble of transportation. This example should be known, that like many others of the kind it may be imitated. It augurs favorably to the cause of temperance, indissolubly connected with the welfare of our common country."

Here we find Messrs. So-and-so *selling* (by way of promoting the cause of temperance) fourteen barrels of brandy at several dollars *below*

the market price ; thus enabling the purchaser to retail nearly double the quantity he formerly did for the same money ; and, consequently, make a man drunk at half the usual price. I would ask, would it not have been doing a much greater service to the cause which they pretend to have in view, and more creditable to themselves, to have emptied these fourteen barrels of brandy into the river ? This paragraph, moreover, says that "this example should be known, that like many others of the kind it may be imitated." The cause forbids that it should ; for instead of aiding in the decrease of the evil, it would evidently produce an increase to an alarming extent.

I find that these Temperance Societies, like the Tract and Missionary Societies, are determined to raise themselves in the world, and heedless of the means which they employ, are becoming extremely arrogant. A short time since the following note was attached to the general notice of a meeting of the New-York Typographical Society :—

"At the last meeting of the Board, a communication was received from the agent of the *Temperance Society*, the Reverend Joshua Leavitt, desiring permission to address the members of the New-York Typographical Society, at the next general meeting, on the objects of the institution in which he is concerned. The directors conceiving that they were not invested with power to grant the request, referred it to the society, and directed the secretary to inform the members that it will be laid before the meeting on Saturday evening next, when, if granted, the agent will be prepared to deliver his address. A general attendance is, therefore, solicited."

This insult to such a respectable body, I am happy to state, met with its merited fate. The delivery of the address did not receive the sanction of the society.

We thus find these men, under the garb of sanctity, pushing themselves into the ranks of respectable citizens, whose duty it is to point out to them fitter subjects for their eulogy, and more in unison with their nature.

JEROM.

SATURDAY, APRIL 25, 1829.

To Correspondents.—"The history of the garment that came from heaven," has been received, and will shortly appear. *Philo Veritas* "On historical evidence," in our next. "Spiritual existences," No. I, will also have an early insertion.

We are almost daily receiving letters from our country subscribers, complaining of the non arrival of their papers. We can assure them that they are regularly put into the post-office here, and as regularly transmitted by that department. The fault must, therefore, remain with the intermediate offices, or with the post-masters at the offices of delivery. The law as to the detention of papers, is sufficiently imperative ; but the difficulty is how to detect offenders. Should any of our subscribers be in possession of facts sufficient to convict any one connected with our post-offices, and will transmit a statement to us, we shall

then know how to apply a remedy. The evil is now become so great, that every effort ought to be made to detect and expose the culprits.

Liberal opinions.—In no part of the union have liberal opinions advanced more rapidly than in the state of Rhode Island, where it was generally thought, high church notions prevailed, in consequence of public affairs being regulated by a charter emanating from an English monarch. Only a few months ago, the legislature of Rhode Island passed a law, by which all disqualifications on account of religious opinions, are removed from witnesses in any court of justice; and now, we are gratified to learn that a tax is about to be levied for public use on all funds of religious institutions within the state. The reasonableness of this no one can deny who admits, that every institution receiving the protection of government, ought to contribute to its support. This is a leading and fundamental principle of all political union which recognises justice as its basis. But the priests of Rhode Island are opposed to this equitable regulation. Like their brethren in all parts of the world, they claim the "fullness of the earth" as an inheritance, and wo to that man, where they have the power, who would deprive them of a single iota of this assumed right. What a striking contrast is formed, between the liberal proceedings of the Rhode Island legislature, and the late bigotted and intolerant law as to blasphemy, passed in New Hampshire! The following extract will be read with pleasure by every well-wisher of mental freedom:—

Newport, 14 February, 1829.

The orthodox party throughout the country, were sadly disappointed on reading Johnson's report, respecting the transportation of the mail on the Sabbath. The stopping the mail was a stepping stone to power, which they were confident of reaching. But the report was a prelude to its final quietus. Mr. Hazzards' resolutions in the legislature of this state to tax all the religious funds, or funds of religious institutions, has given them another shock, which will make them not only disgorge some of their ill-gotten lucre, but will shew them, that the honest part of the community are determined not to be imposed on any longer by such puritanical hypocrites—The resolutions passed the house, and will undoubtedly pass the senate. We have been subscribers to the *Correspondent* for some time, and have the pleasure to inform you, that there are five or six more taken in this town at the present time, and also one of Miss Wright's papers. So you can guess how rapidly the great cause is gaining ground among us. Scarcely a week passes, without some valuable acquisition to the cause of free enquiry. Converts flock to the standard of *Reason* from all quarters; and we are in hopes of getting a lecturer here next summer, if it is only for one week.

We expect that by the time another anniversary of Paine's birth day comes round, to be able to celebrate it in a manner worthy that great and good man. A stray copy of *Ecce Homo*, was sold at auction here a short time since, which caused much alarm among the priests. The rev. P. O. Chowles said he had rather given a hundred dollars than it should have been sold. We have had the dullest winter that I ever knew.

Some copies of the rejected gospels are in town, and also the trial of Robert A. Taylor—so that we have plenty of intellectual food, if we have none for the body.

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS OF OPINION.

Continued from page 205.

From the Constitution of New Jersey:—

Art. 18. That no person shall ever, within this state, be deprived of the inestimable privilege of worshipping almighty God, in a manner agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience; nor, under any pretence whatever, be compelled to attend any place of worship, contrary to his own faith and judgment: nor shall any person within this state ever be obliged to pay tythes, taxes, or any other rates, for the purpose of building or repairing any other church or churches, place or places of worship, or for the maintenance of any minister or ministry, contrary to what he believes to be right, or has deliberately and voluntarily engaged himself to perform.

Art. 19. That there shall be no establishment of any one religious sect in this state, in preference to another; and that no protestant inhabitant of this state shall be denied the enjoyment of any civil right, merely on account of his religious principles; but that all persons, professing a belief in the faith of any protestant sect who shall demean themselves peaceably under the government, as hereby established, shall be capable of being elected into any office of profit or trust, or being a member of either branch of the legislature, and shall fully and freely enjoy every privilege and immunity enjoyed by others their fellow-subjects.

From the Constitution of Pennsylvania:—

Art. 9. § 3. That all men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own consciences; and no man can, of right, be compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship, or to maintain any ministry, against his consent: that no human authority can, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience: and that no preference shall ever be given, by law, to any religious establishments or modes of worship.

§ 4. That no person, who acknowledges the being of a God, and a future state of rewards and punishments, shall, on account of his religious sentiments, be disqualified to hold any office or place of trust or profit under this commonwealth.

§ 7. That the printing presses shall be free to every person who undertakes to examine the proceedings of the legislature, or any branch of government; and no law shall ever be made to restrain the right thereof. The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the invaluable rights of men; and every citizen may freely speak, write, and print on any subject, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty.

From the Constitution of Delaware:—

Art. 1. § 1. Although it is the duty of all men frequently to assemble together for the public worship of the Author of the Universe, and piety and morality, on which the prosperity of communities depends, are thereby promoted; yet, no man shall or ought to be compelled to attend any re-

ligious worship, to contribute to the erection or support of any place of worship, or to the maintenance of any ministry, against his own free will and consent; and no power shall or ought to be vested in or assumed by any magistrate, that shall in any case interfere with, or in any manner control, the rights of conscience, in the free exercise of religious worship, nor a preference given by law to any religious societies, denominations, or modes of worship.

§ 2. No religious test shall be required as a qualification to any office, or public trust, under this state.

§ 5. The press shall be free to every citizen who undertakes to examine the official conduct of men acting in a public capacity; and any citizen may print on any subject, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty.

From the Constitution of Maryland:—

Art. 33. That, as it is the duty of every man to worship God in such manner as he thinks most acceptable to him, all persons professing the Christian religion are equally entitled to protection in their religious liberty; wherefore, no person ought by any law to be molested in his person or estate, on account of his religious persuasion or profession, or for his religious practice; unless, under color of religion, any man shall disturb the good order, peace, or safety of the state, or shall infringe the laws of morality, or injure others in their natural, civil, or religious rights: nor ought any person to be compelled to frequent or maintain, or contribute, unless on contract, to maintain any particular place of worship or any particular ministry.

38. That the liberty of the press ought to be inviolably preserved.

The Constitution of Virginia does not contain a single article respecting religion or the liberty of the press.

From the Constitution of North Carolina:—

Art. 15. That the freedom of the press is one of the great bulwarks of liberty, and therefore ought never to be restrained.

19. That all men have a natural and unalienable, right to worship almighty God, according to the dictates of their own consciences.

31. That no clergyman, or preacher of the gospel, of any denomination, shall be capable of being a member of either the senate, house of commons, council of state, while he continues in the exercise of the pastoral function.

32. That no person who shall deny the being of a God, or the truth of the protestant religion, or the divine authority of either the Old or New Testaments, or who shall hold religious principles incompatible with the freedom and safety of the state, shall be capable of holding any office, or place of trust or profit, in the civil department, within this state.

34. That there shall be no establishment of any one religious church or denomination in this state, in preference to any other; neither shall any person, on any pretence whatsoever, be compelled to attend any place of worship contrary to his own faith or judgment, nor be obliged to pay, for the purchase of any glebe, or the building of any house of worship, or for the maintenance of any minister or ministry, contrary to what he believes right, or has voluntarily and personally engaged to per-

form ; but all persons shall be at liberty to exercise their own mode of worship : Provided, that nothing herein contained shall be construed to exempt preachers of treasonable or seditious discourses, from legal trial and punishment.

From the Constitution of South Carolina :—

Art. 1. § 23. And whereas the ministers of the gospel are, by their profession, dedicated to the service of God, and the care of souls, and ought not to be diverted from the great duty of their functions : therefore, no minister of the gospel, or public preacher, of any religious persuasion, whilst he continues in the exercise of his pastoral functions, shall be eligible to the office of governor, lieutenant governor, or a seat in the senate or house of representatives.

Art. 8. § 1. The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall, for ever hereafter, be allowed within this state to all mankind : Provided, that the liberty of conscience thereby declared, shall not be so construed as to excuse acts of licentiousness, or justify practices inconsistent with the peace or safety of this state.

2. The rights, privileges, immunities, and estate, of both civil and religious societies and of corporate bodies, shall remain as if the constitution of this state had not been altered or amended.

Art. 9. § 6. The trial by jury, as heretofore used in this state, and the liberty of the press, shall be for ever inviolably preserved.

From the Constitution of Georgia :—

Art. 4. § 5. Freedom of the press, and trial by jury, as heretofore used in this state, shall remain inviolate, and no *ex post facto* law shall be passed.

§ 10. No person within this state shall, upon any pretence, be deprived of the inestimable privilege of worshipping God in a manner agreeable to his own conscience, nor be compelled to attend any place of worship contrary to his own faith and judgment ; nor shall he ever be obliged to pay tythes, taxes, or any other rate, for the building or repairing any place of worship, or for the maintenance of any minister or ministry contrary to what he believes to be right, or hath voluntarily engaged to do. No one religious, society shall ever be established in this state, in preference to any other ; nor shall any person be denied the enjoyment of any civil right, merely on account of his religious principles.

To be continued.

MISCELLANEOUS.

PROSECUTIONS IN ENGLAND FOR BLASPHEMY ; *Or speaking evil of the Bible and the Christian Religion.*

Nothing of this kind was known under the sway of the Roman catholic religion, nor until long after the period called the reformation, when the Bible became commonly printed, sold and read.

The first case known to the writer is, that of the reign of Charles the Second, during the chief justiceship of Sir Mathew Hale. Here a new

case arose : some man proclaimed the bible and the Christian religion to be a cheat, and the chief justice, in the absence of an applicable law, made one by his own authority, to punish him. That piece of judge made law has not at any time since been sanctioned by the Legislature, It was founded upon the assertion, *that Christianity was part and parcel of the law of the land*, or what is called *common law* : an idea, that cannot be supported, until Christianity can be defined to be something tangible by law.

The Christian religion had assumed so many and such strange, fantastical and ridiculous shapes, among the dissenters from the established church, during the reign of the Stuarts, and more particularly during the civil war between Charles and the parliament, and during the subsequent commonwealth, that, towards the end of the seventeenth century, knowledge beginning to spread, atheism, deism, and a denial of the doctrine of the trinity had become very common. During the reign of William and Mary, a statute was made, to make a denial of the doctrine of the trinity, or a blasphemy of the bible, penal ; but the moderation of the penalties imposed by that statute, places in no very amiable light the authors of modern prosecutions, and the judges who have passed the shameful sentences suffered and are suffering.

After the passing of that statute, to its partial repeal in 1813, the chief prosecutions for blasphemy, in point of number, were carried on against the unitarians. Mr. Locke was expelled from the university of Oxford ; and tradition says, that it was fear of his great talents being applied to deism or unitarian Christianity, that brought forth the first and only statute in existence against blasphemy in its modern acceptation. Mr. Whiston was also expelled from the university of Cambridge on the ground of unitarian blasphemy.

In the early part of the last century, Mr. Woolston was prosecuted in the court of king's bench, for his work on the miracles of the new testament, in which, he attempted to explain them allegorically. He told the judge and jury, in his defence, that, in point of knowledge, they were not competent to try him, and since it was a question of knowledge, he ought not to be tried by them, or, if tried, acquitted. He was, however, pronounced guilty, and sentenced to one year or eighteen months imprisonment in the king's bench prison, whence he publicly sold his work.

Later in that century, Peter Annet was prosecuted at the old bailey sessions, and fined, imprisoned and pilloried, for a work that ranks no higher in the scale of knowledge, than the writings which now come from the unitarians, and almost pass as orthodox. Both Woolston and Annet had been educated and ordained as clergymen of the established church.

None of the deistical writings of the last century which created as much or more noise and prejudice, than the atheistical writings of the present day, can be now considered other than similar to what are now called unitarian Christian writings. Thomas Paine excepted. Thomas Paine was the first Englishman that struck an honest and well aimed blow at the idolatry of the Christian church. And, from the publication of his *Age of Reason*, modern prosecutions may take their date.

The writer is not positive; but he rather thinks, that a Mr. Simmons, and a Mr. Crosby, were prosecuted for the publication of the first part of the *Age of Reason*, in 1794. But the first effort of the Vice Society was, to prosecute Thomas Williams, in 1797, for the publication of the first and second parts. Williams was sentenced by the court of king's bench to one year's imprisonment in the cold bath fields prison.

The *Age of Reason* was not publicly sold from this time to the month of December 1818, a full lapse of twenty years. Daniel Isaac Eaton published Mr. Paine's *Examination of the Prophecies*, in 1812, under the title of the third page of the *Age of Reason*; for which he was prosecuted and sentenced to imprisonment for eighteen months, and to the pillory. It is supposed, that the pillory, in this instance, was found to be so great an outrage on the public mind, or the London public; that it led to its abolition in the ensuing session of parliament, for all cases but unnatural crime. Eaton was an old man, above threescore, which made the outrage the grater.

Mr. Houston, the author of a work entitled *Ecce Homo, or a Life of Jesus Christ*, was prosecuted, in 1813, and imprisoned two years in newgate, with a fine of two hundred pounds.

The prosecution against Mr. Hone's *Parodies* may rank as religious prosecutions, though the little tracts had none but a political object. There were prosecuted for these, William Hone, Richard Carlile, James Williams of Portsea, Joseph Russell of Birmingham, and James Tucker of Exeter. The latter three suffered about six months imprisonment each for the *Parodies*, notwithstanding the acquittals of the original publisher, Mr. Hone.

After the prosecution of Thomas Williams, and during the administration of Mr. Pitt, a bookseller of the name of Eastburn, a collector of books for an American store, set a man to work to print a private edition. The minister getting information of it made a seizure of the whole edition: though the act was illegal and tantamount to a burglary.

From December 1818, all these suppressed works have been restored by Richard Carlile, and have been in constant open sale to this time. In 1819, he was proceeded against by the attorney general for the publication of a collection of Paine's *Theological Works*, and by the Vice Society for the publication of Palmer's *Principles of Nature*. On the former case, he was sentenced to two years imprisonment and a fine of one thousand pounds; on the latter, to one year's imprisonment and a fine of five hundred pounds.

John Cahuac was prosecuted in 1819, at the instance of the Vice Society, for the publication of Palmer's *Principles of Nature*; but the prosecution was compromised for a sum of money.

Thomas Tyler was prosecuted by the Vice Society, for selling a copy of the new edition of Paine's *Theological Works*, and received three months imprisonment in cold bath fields prison, in 1820.

To be continued.

Holy days.—What shall we say of those fetes which are so multiplied amongst us? Are they not evidently pernicious to society? Are not all

days the same to the eternal? Are there *gala* days in heaven? Can God be honored by the business of an artisan or merchant, who, in place of earning bread on which his family may subsist, squanders away his time in the church, and afterwards goes to spend his money in the public-house? It is necessary, the priests will tell you, for men to have repose. But will he not seek repose when he is fatigued by the labor of his hands? Is it not more necessary that every man should labor in his vocation that go to a temple to chant over a service which benefits only the priests, or hear a sermon of which he can understand nothing? And do not such as find great scruple in doing a necessary labor on Sunday, frequently sit down and get drunk on that day, consuming in a few hours the receipts of their week's labor? But it is for the interest of the clergy that all other shops should be shut when their's are open. We may thence easily discover why Sunday is necessary.

Free Press Association.—The meetings of the Association are now held in the Bowery Long Room, opposite the Theatre, every Sunday afternoon, at 3 o'clock, for lectures, and in the evening, at 7 o'clock for debates.

The *first* of a series of lectures, *on the proofs of the existence of Jesus Christ, and the origin of Christianity*, by Mr. Houston, having been postponed in consequence of the death of one of the lecturer's family, it will be delivered to-morrow afternoon at the usual hour.

In the evening, the debate will be resumed on the following question:—*Would the death of Jesus Christ, as an atonement for the sins of the human race, be consonant to the principles of justice?*

Tickets of admission to the debate, (to be had at the door) three cents each. Ladies free.

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